What is the Water Reuse Study?

How did the study begin?

In January 2004, the San Diego City Council approved a study of all the City's recycled water options to assist in planning for an adequate and reliable future water supply.

What options are being studied?

All the potential recycled water options will be studied. No specific option will be recommended to the City Council at the study conclusion.

- Expanding the existing distribution system for irrigation and industrial use
- Additional customer uses for construction, manufacturing, cooling towers, etc.
- Creating recycled water storage reservoirs
- Wetlands development
- Discharge into streams
- Options for excess recycled water produced during low demands for irrigation
- Recharging groundwater basins
- After additional advanced treatment, blending with water stored in reservoirs that are used as drinking water sources
- Graywater use

How can I keep informed of study progress and activities?

The study website contains documents elaborating various community activities, news releases, monthly news briefs and materials related to the American Assembly and Independent Advisory Panel workshops.

Water Reuse Study Mission:

To pursue opportunities to increase local water supply and reliability, and optimize local water assets, through a comprehensive study of recycled water.

Water Reuse Study Objective:

To conduct an impartial, balanced, comprehensive and science-based study of all recycled water opportunities so that the City can meet current and future water supply and reuse needs.

Water Reuse Study Goals:

1. Develop opportunities for recycled water that are safe, economically viable, environmentally sustainable, protect human health, and reflect public values through a fair and unbiased evaluation of recycled water uses.
2. Partner with residents, businesses, agencies and government to help policy makers make informed decisions on how to best use recycled water.
3. Provide tools to expand the public's awareness, knowledge and involvement of those who will be served and present information in a way that is understandable and accessible to all San Diegans.

Water Reuse Study 2005
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City of San Diego Water Department

Water Reuse Study 2005:

Local Solutions to Our Long-Term Water Needs

www. sandiego.gov/ water/waterreusestudy

Water Reuse Study: Local Solutions to Our Long-Term Water Needs

Why We Should Use More Recycled Water

Water is essential to our growing economy, our children's future, and our quality of life. Increasing our use of recycled water helps diversify our local water resources and ensure a reliable water supply.

The City of San Diego imports 80 to 90 percent of its water supply from northern California and the Colorado River. The City's other water sources are from stored local runoff and water recycling. Over the past 19 years, the City's conservation programs have helped reduce the City's dependence on imported water. Today the program saves approximately 20,000 acre feet of potable (drinking) water a year, which is enough to meet the water needs of 40,000 typical families for a year.

Even with aggressive conservation efforts, the City may need 25 percent more water in 2030. Many factors contribute to our increased future water needs – California's reduced access to surplus water from the Colorado River recurring droughts affecting imported water supplies, and current population projections.

The threat of drought also weighs heavily in future water planning. With our arid, Mediterranean-like climate, nominal rainfall and few groundwater resources, San Diego is highly susceptible in times of drought. Recycled water is available during a drought and is not restricted for outdoor use during normal water supply conditions or droughts.

The City is Recycling Water Now

The City of San Diego began deliveries of recycled water to customers in 1997 and operates two state-of-the-art water reclamation facilities. The larger plant is the North City Water Reclamation Plant, which opened in 1997. The smaller plant is the South Bay Water Reclamation Plant, which opened in 2002.

Both of the City's current facilities are designed to handle future wastewater flows and produce more recycled water.

Some of the largest customers are Torrey Pines Golf Course, UCSD, Caltrans, U.S. Marine Corp Air Station, and City Parks and Recreation Department.

A Widely Used Resource

Recycled water has been used in San Diego County for decades. Local distributors of recycled water include the City of Carlsbad, Padre Dam Municipal Water District, Olivenhain Municipal Water District, and Vallecitos Water District.

In southern California, recycled water has been used for nearly 30 years by the Irvine Ranch Water District and also used extensively in the Los Angeles area. In Orange County, recycled water that has undergone additional advanced treatment is added to groundwater basins to keep salt water out of the drinking water supplies.

The Economic Benefits of Recycled Water

As the costs of imported water continue to rise, producing a local supply of water by recycling water is an economic benefit. Recycled water is priced less than potable water.

Demonstrating a reliable water supply is vital to local economic development. Businesses and industry look for a reliable water supply when making business decisions, such as relocating or expanding facilities. Recycled water offers the reliability businesses seek.

More Recycled Water Storage = More Year-Round Production

Recycled water production is affected by seasonal water use. A majority of the City's current recycled water customers use the water for landscape irrigation. Typically, customers use twice as much recycled water for irrigation in the warm summer months than in winter. Because of these varying demands, about half of the water reclamation facility's potential treatment capacity (on average) may be unused for part of the year.

The study is addressing the seasonal demands for recycled water to optimize the production and use of recycled water in San Diego.

Public Involvement

The Water Reuse Study is analyzing the various options for expanding recycled water use through extensive public involvement. A wide range of meetings and communication opportunities – including a speakers bureau, American Assembly process, stakeholder interviews, and website – are facilitating dialogue and information sharing with city residents and the study team.

An Impartial, Science-Based Study of Recycled Water

An Independent Advisory Panel of leaders in the areas of medicine, science, education and economics has been assembled by the National Water Research Institute and is reviewing the health, scientific and technological components of the study opportunities.

What Do You Think?

We encourage you to provide your feedback on the study through a web-based survey which can be found at www.sandiego.gov/water/waterreusestudy.